

MASSACHUSETTS MISSING CHILDREN CLEARINGHOUSE

Helpful Definitions

As you encounter the criminal justice system there may be a variety of acronyms and terms which you are unfamiliar with. The following is a list of definitions designed to better help you understand the system(s).

BOP (Board of Probation) – An electronic system that provides information on Massachusetts court appearances (adult and juvenile).

Child in Need of Services (CHINS) – A Child in Need of Services (CHINS) matter is a court case in which the Juvenile Court tries to help parents and school officials deal with troubled youth. The person filing the CHINS petition must show the judge that the child:

- regularly runs away from home; or
- constantly disobeys the commands of a parent or legal guardian; or
- misses school on a regular basis; or
- constantly fails to follow school rules.

Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) – The Criminal Justice Information System offers law enforcement and criminal justice agencies within the state and across the nation secure access 24 hours per day 7 days a week to state and interstate criminal history record information, protective orders, missing and wanted person files, drivers' license and motor vehicle information, firearms licensing and gun sales transactions and other critical criminal justice information via the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS). For additional information, or answers to questions not found on this site please contact the CJIS Support Services Unit at (617) 660-4710 weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Department of Children and Families (DCF) – The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is the Massachusetts state agency responsible for protecting children from child abuse and neglect. To report abuse or neglect, call the Child-at-Risk Hotline anytime of the day or night at 800-792-5200.

Department of Youth Services (DYS) – The Department of Youth Services is the juvenile justice agency of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Their mission is to protect the public and prevent crime by promoting positive change in the lives of youth committed to our custody, and by partnering with communities, families, government and provider agencies toward this end. They accomplish this mission through interventions that build knowledge, develop skills and change the behavior of the youth in our care.

National Criminal Information Center (NCIC) – The National Crime Information Center is a nationwide, computerized information system whose purpose is to provide and maintain a computerized filing system of documented criminal justice information readily available to authorized criminal justice agencies.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) – The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) is a private, non-profit organization established in the United States in 1984 under United States government mandate. The Center acts as an information resource to help find children who have been reported missing (either by parental abduction, child abduction or running away from home) and to help children who may be being abused or sexually abused. In this resource role, the National Center distributes photographs of missing children and accepts tips and information from the public. The Center works with numerous state and federal agencies, including the Massachusetts Missing Children Clearinghouse.

Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB) – The Sex Offender Registry Board is the state agency responsible for keeping a database of convicted sex offenders and classifying each offender so that the public may receive information about dangerous sex offenders who live or work in each community. The goal of the Sex Offender Registry is to educate the public and to prevent further victimization.

WMS (Warrant Management System) – In December 1994, the Legislature enacted the Warrant Reform Act creating a statewide, electronic, arrest warrant database known as the Warrant Management System (WMS). As a result, Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to create a statewide, 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week, real-time warrant database.

CATEGORIES OF MISSING

Endangered

Generally considered under the circumstances noted below:

- Child is 10 years of age or younger, left of his or her own free will, and does not fall under the Non-family Abduction or Family Abduction categories
- Child is lost and possibly injured in conjunction with an accident that occurred
- Child is lost or otherwise missing, but the information provided for the case is insufficient to classify it under a more specific category

Endangered runaway

Generally considered under the circumstances noted below:

- Child is 11 to 17 years of age or younger and leaves of his or her own free will; or
- Child is 11 to 17 years of age **and** any of the following applies:
 - Child is carrying a **weapon**
 - Child is involved with **drugs, alcohol, gang activity**, and/or **prostitution**
 - Child has a **medical condition** (physical and/or mental)
 - Child is enticed to run away through contact **online** or a **telephone chat line**

Family abduction

When the child is abducted by:

- Non-custodial parent;
- Stepparent;
- Foster parent(s);
- Grandparent(s);
- Cousin(s);
- Any other individual related to the child by blood or marriage.

Non-family abduction:

The child is abducted by an individual:

- With whom the child is acquainted, but the abductor is not related to the child by blood or marriage
- The child's family does not know
- The child does not know